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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 000401

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2013
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [FR](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH RESPONSE TO DEMARCHE ON SEEKING BALANCED
UNSC RESOLUTION ON THE SITUATION IN GAZA

REF: STATE 22380

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4. (b), (d).

1. (C) We conveyed points in reftel to the NEA and IO directorates at the French MFA on March 5. DAS-equivalent for the Levant Ludovic Pouille responded that France was "in accord" with us on the substance (Hamas' fundamental responsibility for the current situation and the importance of not derailing the peace process) but not with our "diagnosis" of the situation. As he put it, if firing the rockets is unjustifiable and subject to condemnation, Israel's use of disproportionate and excessive force in response (leading to the death of 23 children and 12 women in recent days) had to be acknowledged. Pouille claimed that France, the EU, and the U.S. had already denounced Israel's reaction in these terms.

2. (C) IO desk officer for the Middle East Salina Grenet, meanwhile, noted that the MFA had already received cables from Washington and New York reporting our concerns about the French amendment. She stressed that the GOF was fully in agreement on our point regarding the timing of any UNSC action, i.e., that the UNSC should not move too quickly on the resolution out of concern that might upset the Secretary's diplomatic efforts in the region. Grenet said

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that the UNSC must allow these diplomatic efforts to play out fully. Like Pouille, however, Grenet claimed that the reference to Israel's "disproportionate and excessive use of force" merely repeated the UNSYG's description and was consistent with French and EU public characterizations. France believes it essential that the resolution clearly refer to the rockets as well as Israel's military response (something Grenet claimed the Libyans rejected) and had proposed two operative paragraphs that would separately treat Hamas' firing of the rockets and Israel's use of force. She said France was waiting for the Libyan reaction to all the proposed changes. The instructions to the French mission in New York for its representatives at the March 5 experts meeting would be to (1) oppose any pressure for quick action on the resolution while the Secretary was in the region and (2) weigh carefully the various reactions (especially what the Libyans report following consultations with the Arab group) to the draft in play.

3. (C) Grenet, speaking personally, thought that the U.S. and France could come to some agreement on the wording, especially if "disproportionate" was one of our major sticking points. She was less tractable, however, with respect to the word "excessive" in describing Israel's use of force.

4. (SBU) We have not been able to find any recent French

statements on the situation in Gaza that use the words "disproportionate" or "excessive" in describing Israel's use of force. The MFA's spokesperson since February 29 has balanced criticism of Israel's military actions (including condemnation of "the practice of extrajudicial killing" and appeals for restraint) with calls for "a complete end to rocket fire by Palestinian factions against Israeli territory." She has similarly deplored the deaths of Palestinian children from Israeli military operations as well as the deaths of Israelis due to Palestinian rockets. France has generally stressed that all violence must cease and that there can be no military solution to the situation. FM Kouchner underscored these points in an interview on 3 March before reaffirming the necessity of resuming Palestinian/Israeli negotiations. He further restated France's commitment to a two-state solution and pursuit of the diplomatic process launched at Annapolis.

15. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

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